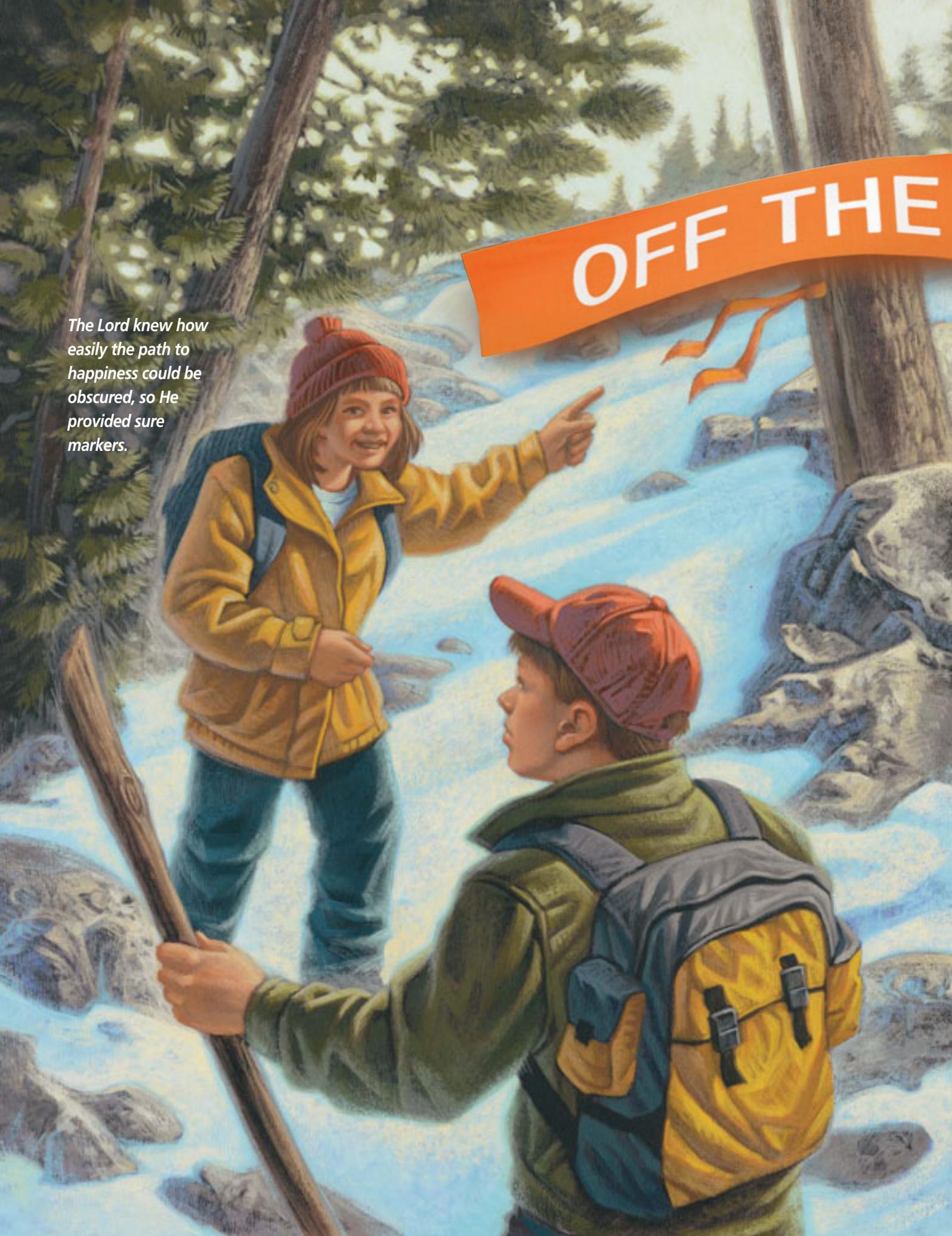


# OFF THE



*The Lord knew how easily the path to happiness could be obscured, so He provided sure markers.*

# BEATEN PATH

*Getting lost can happen by ignoring the markers that can lead the way.*

I never got lost in a supermarket as a child. I never was so turned around in a building that I couldn't find my way out, and I never had trouble finding my way home after dark. With a perfect never-lost track record, losing my way didn't even occur to me one Saturday as I began hiking to Heather Lake in western Washington.

The trail was surrounded by moss-covered redwoods and pines. As my best friend Jenn and I started out, we didn't pay much attention to the orange tags marking the trail because the well-worn path was so obvious. However, conditions changed as we climbed higher. We hadn't expected to see anything but summer foliage, but soon occasional patches of snow turned into a layer of ice crunching beneath our boots. We were heartened by a hiker returning from the top who assured us that the view was worth the effort. We hurried on, hoping our speed would warm us.

As we continued into deeper snow and lowering temperatures, our path forked. We assumed the most worn path would be the right way to the lake. The path forked again and then again. We kept following what looked like the most worn path until the trail stopped. Jenn and I looked at each other in surprise. We thought that our path would lead us to the lake, but instead we were at the end of a trail next to a freezing river. I quickly looked around to get my bearings, but the clouds obscured the sun. We didn't have a compass or even a map. As we looked around, I realized that we were lost.

Just as I began to feel a swell of panic, Jenn had an idea. "All we have to do is find an orange marker," she said. After a minute of looking around, we saw a marker

tied to a distant tree. In my rush to get my bearings, I hadn't even noticed them. Jenn was right. By following the markers, we finally reached our destination.

The lake was beautiful, but I still felt unsettled. How had I become lost following the trail of hikers who were all trying to get to the same place I was? As I thought about this, I remembered Lehi's dream as recorded in 1 Nephi 8. Lehi saw numberless people heading for the same destination—the tree of life. When mists of darkness obscured their path, those who followed the iron rod were safe, but those who ignored it "did lose their way, that they wandered off and were lost" (verse 23).

In this same way, Jenn and I headed towards something joyful only to have our path obscured by lingering snowbanks. We assumed that following the trail left by others would lead us to our goal. But we were lost. The park rangers knew this could happen and provided a sure way of determining the route under all conditions. Only by following these markers, placed by those who had made the trail, could we reach Heather Lake.

We face a similar situation today. Most of the people around us are seeking for happiness, but following the trends of the world can lead us off the true path. The Lord knew how easily the path to happiness could be obscured, so He provided sure markers. These markers—the scriptures, Church leaders, and the gift of the Holy Ghost—show us the right path no matter how bewildering our surroundings. These are sure guides, whether we are continuing on the trail or finding our way back, we can always trust them.

The other hiker was right. Heather Lake was the most beautiful place we had ever seen. Likewise, if we hold to the rod and endure to the end, we will receive "eternal life, which gift is the greatest of all the gifts of God" (D&C 14:7). **NE**